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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001697

SIPDIS

SECSTATE DELIVER/PASS TO DAVID HEGWOOD/USDA WASHDC
FROM THE AMBASSADOR TO USDA SECRETARY VENEMAN
EPA FOR ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN
DEPT FOR U/S LARSON AND SCIENCE ADVISOR NEUREITER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC EDSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2012

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SUBJECT: OUR MESSAGE ON BIOTECH: GOI NEEDS TO HEAR IT DIRECT

REF: STATE 42136

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR MEL SEMBLER FOR REASONS 1.5 (B AND D)

11. (U) THIS IS AN URGENT ACTION MESSAGE.

12. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: I NEED YOUR HELP TO KEEP THE GOI FROM SLIDING INTO THE ANTI-BIOTECH CAMP. SINCE THE OCTOBER 2001 EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER AND THE VISIT OF AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VENEMAN IN NOVEMBER, THE PM HAS NOT MADE GOOD ON HIS PLEDGE TO OPEN ITALY TO BIOTECHNOLOGY. IN THE MEANTIME, AN EVER BOLDER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HAS DEVISED A CLEVER STRATEGY WHICH LEADS IN THE DIRECTION OF CLOSING ITALY TO ALL AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY. MINISTER ALEMANNO'S WHITE PAPER, DESCRIBED AND ANALYZED SEPARATELY, IS TO BE INTRODUCED INTO PARLIAMENT FOR WHAT WILL SURELY BE A HIGHLY PREJUDICIAL DEBATE ABOUT THE MERITS OF AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY FOR ITALY. IF THE PAPER IS INTRODUCED IN ITS CURRENT FORM, I BELIEVE THE PRIME MINISTER WILL BE POLITICALLY HARD-PRESSED TO MOVE ITALY TOWARD A BIOTECH POLICY FRIENDLIER TO OUR INTERESTS.
ACTION REQUEST: I NEED YOU TO HELP ME SEND A WAKE-UP MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER. WE NEED HIM TO PUT BIOTECHNOLOGY NEAR THE TOP OF HIS AGENDA WITH US FOR A FEW CRITICAL DAYS. I'M ASKING EACH OF YOU TO CALL OR WRITE GOI MINISTERS AND SENIOR ADVISORS AS OUTLINED IN THE GAME PLAN BELOW. OUR GOAL IS TO BURY ALEMANNO'S PAPER IN THE PM'S NATIONAL COMMISSION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY, AND TO ENSURE THAT FULL GOVERNMENT REVIEW PRECEDES THE OPEN DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT. WE NEED TO GET OUR
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PAGE 03 ROME 01697 01 OF 02 041547Z
MESSAGE THROUGH BEFORE THE WHITE PAPER'S INTRODUCTION INTO PARLIAMENT, WHICH COULD BE AS EARLY AS APRIL 15. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

13. (C) PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI IS PREOCCUPIED WITH MESSY FIGHTS OVER THE BUDGET AND LABOR REFORM, NOT TO MENTION FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS. (HE RETAINS THE FOREIGN MINISTER PORTFOLIO.) ABSENT HIS DIRECT ENGAGEMENT, OR AT LEAST A CLEAR SIGNAL FROM HIM, MOST OF THE GOVERNMENT FALLS BACK ON EXCUSES AND DELAYING TACTICS. THERE'S ONE EXCEPTION, THOUGH: AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNO. HE IS TRYING TO USE HIS POWER BASE AMONG GREENS AND THE WELL-ORGANIZED, HIGHLY CHARGED ANTI-BIOTECH FARM ORGANIZATION COLDIRETTI TO LEAPFROG OVER THE MAJORITY OF ITALIAN STAKEHOLDERS AND THE REST OF THE GOI AND LOCK ITALY INTO AN ANTI-BIOTECH POSTURE.

14. (C) THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WITHIN THE GOI OPPOSED TO ALEMANNO'S APPROACH; I BELIEVE THEY CONSTITUTE THE MAJORITY. BUT THEIR POSITION IS UNCOORDINATED, AND THEY NEED MORE TIME TO DEVELOP A COHERENT FRONT. WE NEED TO WORK HARD NOW TO BUY THEM THAT TIME, VIA SOME INTERCESSION FROM THE TOP. TO GIVE THEM EQUAL HEARING I URGENTLY ASK EACH OF YOU TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PROPOSED ACTIONS:

FOR SECRETARY VENEMAN: THAT YOU WRITE A LETTER TO MINISTER ALEMANNO EXPLAINING U.S. CONCERN WITH THE MINISTRY'S BIASED ASSESSMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY AND URGING HIM TO BASE HIS ASSESSMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY ON SOUND SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE. I WILL PERSONALLY DELIVER YOUR LETTER TO THE MINISTER. EMBASSY FAS MINISTER-COUNSELOR WILL WORK WITH YOUR OFFICE ON A DRAFT AND TRANSLATION.

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PAGE 04 ROME 01697 01 OF 02 041547Z

FOR EPA ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN: THAT YOU MEET WITH MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT MATTEOLI AT BANFF ON APRIL 12, AND LET HIM KNOW THAT BIOTECHNOLOGY IS NEAR THE TOP OF OUR PRESIDENT'S AGENDA, AND THAT WE LOOK TO ITALY FOR HELP. EMBASSY EST COUNSELOR IS WORKING WITH YOUR OFFICE.

FOR U/S LARSON: THAT YOU TALK WITH AMBASSADOR SALLEO BEFORE APRIL 15, AND SHARE WITH HIM YOUR VIEWS ON BIOTECHNOLOGY, AND OUR CONCERN THAT ITALY IS ABOUT TO TAKE A SERIOUS WRONG TURN. SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS TO FOLLOW SEPTEL.

FOR WHITE HOUSE NSC GARY EDSON: YOU KNOW THE PM'S DIPLOMATIC COUNSELOR, AMBASSADOR GIANNI CASTELLANETA, FROM G-8 MEETINGS.

I ASK THAT YOU CALL HIM, REMIND HIM OF THE OCTOBER EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND PM, AND EXPLAIN THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED NOW, MORE THAN EVER, TO ENSURE THAT ITALIAN BIOTECH POLICY DOES NOT GO OFF THE RAILS. MY DCM HAS ADDRESSED THIS ISSUE WITH CASTELLANETA, AND WE KNOW THAT HE SHARED OUR PAPER WITH THE PM. NONETHELESS, IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR HIM TO HEAR IT AGAIN FROM YOU. HE'LL GET YOUR MESSAGE, AS WELL, TO THE PM.

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PAGE 01 ROME 01697 02 OF 02 041548Z
ACTION SSO-00

INFO LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	COME-00
DODE-00	DOEE-00	DATE-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	E-00
FAAE-00	VC-00	HHS-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	AC-01
NSAE-00	OES-01	ACE-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	EPAE-00	DSCC-00
DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/005W		

-----7F1222 041632Z /38

R 041458Z APR 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3104
WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC
HQ EPA WASHDC
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 ROME 001697

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PAGE 02 ROME 01697 02 OF 02 041548Z

FOR SCIENCE ADVISOR NEUREITER: THAT YOU WRITE TO MINISTER OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH LETIZIA MORATTI AND TO MINISTER OF HEALTH GIROLAMO SIRCHIA TO EXPRESS CONCERN THAT ITALY IS ABOUT TO UNDERTAKE A POLICY DISCUSSION THAT HAS APPARENTLY OVERLOOKED THE ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH TO ANY SOUND DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT. I HAVE RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH BOTH OF THEM RECENTLY, AND THEY INDICATED AN INTEREST IN WORKING WITH US. EMBASSY EST COUNSELOR IS AVAILABLE TO WORK WITH YOUR OFFICE ON DRAFTING THIS MESSAGE.

15. (C) I WILL MAKE ADDITIONAL CALLS RE BIOTECH ON THE PRIME MINISTER IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT HE CANNOT DOUBT THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO ITALY'S HELP WITH BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE POSSIBLE IMPACT ITALIAN SUPPORT COULD HAVE ON OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES.
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